

Carex obtusata Liljeblad

obtuse sedge
Cyperaceae (Sedge Family)

Status: State Sensitive

Rank: G5S2

General Description: Adapted from FNA (2002): This species is a perennial sedge of vernal moist areas, with culms that are 1 1/8 to 7/4 in. (3 to 20 cm) tall. The leaves have blades that are 1/64 to 1/16 in. (0.5 to 1.5 mm) wide. The pistillate scales are brown, with thin translucent margins, lanceolate, 1/8 in. (2.5 to 4.5 mm), and as wide and as long as or slightly shorter than the enclosed perigynia. It mostly has 1 to 6 perigynia. The perigynia are finely veined, at least in the proximal 1/2, and are 1/8 in. (3 to 3.8 mm) long, thick walled, tough and leathery. The beak teeth are firm or flexible.

Identification Tips: *Carex obtusata* most closely resembles *Carex breweri* and *Carex subnigricans*. These species can be distinguished by their perigynia and habitat. *C. obtusata* mostly has 1 to 6 perigynia that are thick-walled, tough, and leathery. This species grows in dry to vernal moist areas. *C. breweri* and *C. subnigricans* mostly have numerous perigynia that are thin-walled, and not at all thick, tough, and leathery. A technical key is needed for identification.

Phenology: This species is identifiable between June and August.

Range: This circumboreal species can be found in Eurasia, Alaska and Canada south to New Mexico and South Dakota. In Washington, *C. obtusata* has been found in Jefferson, Clallam, and Mason counties.

Habitat: In Washington, this species grows in scree meadows that are vernal moist, on alpine talus, and on ridgetops from 4700 to 6640 ft (1433 to 2024 m) elevation. Associated species include spreading phlox (*Phlox diffusa*), cushion buckwheat (*Eriogonum ovalifolium*), featherleaf kittentails (*Synthyris pinnatifida*), shrubby cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticosa*), yellowdot saxifrage (*Saxifraga bronchialis*), beautiful sandwort (*Arenaria rubella*), common juniper (*Juniperus communis*), field locoweed (*Oxytropis campestris*), mountain owl's-clover (*Orthocarpus imbricatus*), bluegrass (*Poa* spp.), club moss (*Lycopodiella* sp.), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), fleabane (*Erigeron* spp.), stonecrop (*Sedum* sp.), and Reynolds' sedge (*Carex raynoldsii*).

Ecology: *Carex obtusata* prefers to grow in dry to vernal moist areas at mid to high elevations.

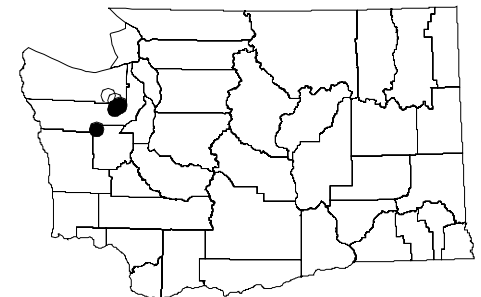
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Known distribution
of *Carex obtusata*
in Washington



● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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State Status Comments: This species is known from fewer than 10 occurrences that are confined to a small geographic area. All occurrences are within either the Olympic National Forest or Olympic National Park.

Inventory Needs: Scree meadows, talus slopes, and ridgetops at mid to high elevations in Jefferson, Clallam, and Mason counties should be systematically surveyed for additional populations. Known occurrences should be revisited.

Threats and Management Concerns: Specific threats have not been identified for this species. However, the small range of this taxon in Washington and the small number of known occurrences are major concerns. Any disturbance to the localized habitat may constitute a threat.

References:

Flora of North America Editorial Committee eds. 2002. *Flora of North America North of Mexico* Volume 23: *Magnoliophyta: Commelinidae (in part): Cyperaceae*. Oxford University Press, New York, NY. 608 pp.

Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, J.W. Thompson. 1969. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest Part 1: Vascular Cryptogams, Gymnosperms, and Monocotyledons*. University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA. 914 pp.